Article

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Precedent and the Aboriginal Response to Global Incursions: Smallpox and Identity Reformation Among the Coast Salish*

KEITH THOR CARLSON

Abstract

Aboriginal people's responses to globalization have been varied and complex. This paper looks at one particular expression of globalism (contact-era epidemics among the Coast Salish of southwestern BC and northwestern Washington) and situates it within the context of earlier regional catastrophes as understood through legendary stories. In this way the paper reframes one of the standard interpretive paradigms of the field – that the epidemics were unprecedented and that they represented perhaps the most significant "break" in Indigenous history. The article shows the ways in which Coast Salish communities and individuals coped with disasters. It concludes that ancient stories provided people with precedents that then shaped their response to globalism. The article also illustrates the ways in which historians can learn from Indigenous modes of history, in which genealogies, myth-ages stories, and specific places play crucial roles.

Résumé

Les réactions des Autochtones par rapport à la mondialisation ont été variées et complexes. Cette communication examine une expression particulière de l'internationalisme (épidémies au sein de la Première nation Coast Salish du

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sud-ouest de la C.-B. et nord-ouest de l'État Washington par suite du contact avec les Européens) et le situe dans le contexte des premières catastrophes régionales telles que comprises aux moyens des légendes. De cette façon, l'article recadre un des paradigmes d'interprétation standard du domaine – à l'effet que les épidémies étaient sans précédent et qu'elles représentaient peut-être la plus importante « rupture » de l'histoire autochtone. L'article montre les façons dont les communautés et les membres de la Première nation Coast Salish ont affronté les désastres. Il conclut que les histoires anciennes fournissaient au peuple des précédents qui façonnaient ensuite sa réaction à l'internationalisme. L'article illustre comment les historiens peuvent puiser dans les façons de raconter des Autochtones, dans lesquelles les généalogies, les légendes mythiques et les endroits spécifiques jouent des rôles cruciaux.

More than a decade ago Alleta Biersack pointed out that, contrary to popular assumptions and scholarly interpretations alike, the outcome of globalism had not been a world in which the indigenous other had disappeared, but a world in which indigenous people found new ways to be different.[1] The
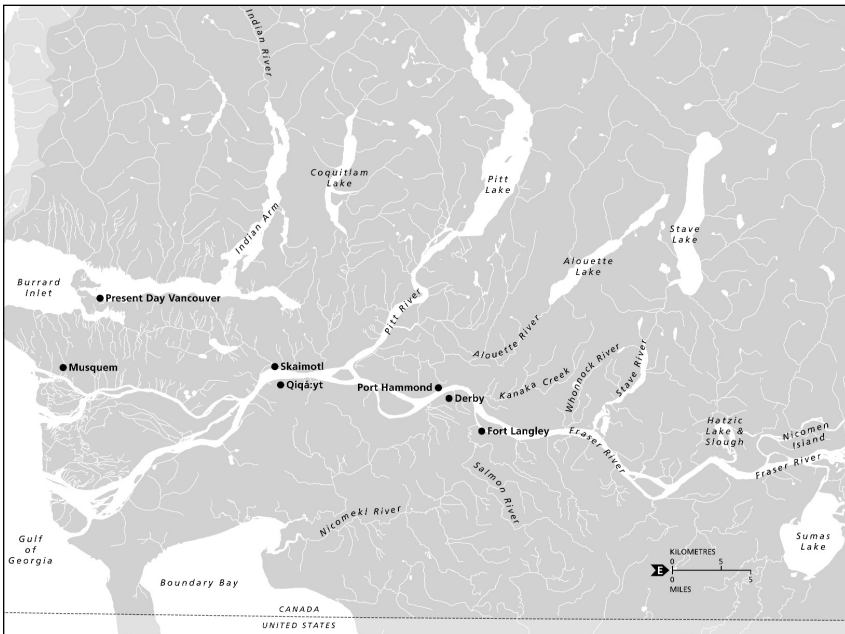
Map 1

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1 Aletta Biersack, *Clio in Oceania: Towards a Historical Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 4.

implications of this observation for the way we understand Aboriginal identity, as well as for our understandings of the role of global forces within indigenous history, have yet to be fully explored. Drawing on oral histories and archival sources, and situating them within the context of indigenous historical consciousness (the way indigenous people understand and re-examine their own historical assumptions over time), this article presents a significant reframing of one of the central assumptions in North American Native-newcomer historiography, and in so doing examines some of the ways that indigenous people have found new ways to be different and yet still the same. Rather than viewing the first viral epidemics and the introduction of the global market economy as unprecedented events in Aboriginal history that signified a major break in cultural continuity, such occurrences are here re-situated to reveal the degree to which pre-contact precedents not only guided Aboriginal people through the turbulent introductory waters of modernity, but also shaped their response to global forces.

A significant factor obscuring our appreciation of the role of precedent in Aboriginal responses to introduced disease and the global economy has been the exaggerated opposition between structure and event in ethnohistorical research. The historian's propensity to focus on events and biography and the anthropologist's penchant for structure and process have long prevented the insights of either discipline from fully contributing to analysis in the other. Indeed, as Marshall Sahlins not so long ago observed, structure is too often conceived as being to the event "as the social is to the individual, the essential to the accidental, the recurrent to the idiosyncratic, the invisible to the visible, the lawful to the aleatory, the quotidian to the extraordinary, the silent to the audible, the comparable to the unique."[2] By adjusting our gaze to look for both continuity in change and change in continuity (that is, by merging the diachronic and synchronic paradigms), and then by looking at how structure shaped the ways in which events could be interpreted and responded to within a culture, we stand to create not only richer scholarship, but interpretations that are more recognizable and meaningful to indigenous people themselves as they struggle to come to grips with the effects of colonialism and globalism.

Events feature prominently in the historical consciousness of the Coast Salish people on Canada's Pacific coast. This is especially the case with regard to narratives of event-inspired migration and historical collective identity reformation. Within the oral canon of the Coast Salish people living along the lower reaches of the Fraser River and the adjacent shores of the internationally divided waters on the west coast of Canada and the United States, numerous

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2 Marshall Sahlins, "The Return of the Event, Again: With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War to 1855 Between the Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa," in *Clio in Oceania*, ed. Alletta Biersack, 40.

stories describe events that caused people to physically relocate, and therefore socially and politically reconstitute themselves. These precipitating events range in kind and temporal period from the dawn-of-time arrival of the Sky-born heroes and Transformer siblings, to what is referred to as the Great Flood, to particularly severe droughts and winter storms, to the first smallpox epidemic, and to the establishment of the earliest Hudson's Bay Company fur trade posts.

Event-inspired migrations played such a large role in Coast Salish history that it is fair to say that epidemic diseases caused Coast Salish people to twice effectively "resettle" portions of the Northwest Coast at least two generations prior to the much better-known and studied European resettlement of the mid-nineteenth century.[3] But unlike the Europeans who followed, indigenous migrants did not occupy lands to which they had no previous connections or relationships. By engaging not only narratives but also genealogies and epistemologies that reveal the special role of specific historical, social, and spiritual sites on the Aboriginal landscape, historians can build not only more complicated histories, but also analyses that engage with indigenous modes of history. The Native resettlement of South West British Columbia, Canada, for example, was built upon an existing web of social and economic intercommunity ties, and was shaped by notions of what land was most spiritually potent. Shared collective identities that had previously lain latent, or which served principally economic and social functions in the exchange of food wealth or the granting of access to hereditary property to distant kin and affines, were operationalized to provide the migrations with legitimacy. In other words, individuals, families, and sometimes entire settlement- or tribal-based[4] communities, examined their history to ascertain where on the landscape and with whom in their social universe they had social, economic, or metaphysical connections.

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3 R.C. Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991).

4 The concept of "tribe" and "tribal identity" remains problematic with regard to the Coast Salish. Among Coast Salish people themselves the English term "tribe" remains a regular part of conversation and vocabulary, although no corresponding word appears to exist in a Central Coast Salish language — Michael Kew, personal communication with author, 1993 and 1997, and Brent Galloway, personal communication with author,1995. Franz Boas, George Gibbs, T.T. Waterman, and Charles Hill-Tout — the most prominent of the early ethnographers to work among the Coast Salish — all employed the term tribe, if uncritically. In 1940 Marian Smith provided the first serious analysis of Coast Salish tribal identity, "The Puyallup-Nisqually," *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology* 32 (1940), reprinted, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1969. Her thesis was recently revived and expanded upon by Jay Miller in *Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey: An Anchored Radiance*. (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press 1999). Dorothy Kennedy has provided a critique of academic assumptions behind the concept of Coast Salish tribe. See Dorothy Kennedy, "Looking for Tribes in all the Wrong Places: An Examination of the Central Coast Salish Social Network" (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1993).

Clearly, the power of, or lurking behind, introduced disease and the capital-
ist market economy created opportunities as well as crisis and challenges. As
such, analysis of the resulting events and migrations described in the Salish oral
traditions provides glimpses into the dynamic tensions between identity stasis and
identity innovation within indigenous society. And because there have always
been choices, tensions have long existed within Coast Salish society, the most
common being gender- and class-based. Identity reformations emerged in part
from these tensions, and once complete, generated new tensions. Effective Coast
Salish leaders were those best able to mitigate and manage tensions, and, when
mitigation ceased to be an option, found innovative and acceptable channels into
which the tensions could be directed. This essay, therefore, contributes to ongo-
ing broader discussions about the nature of "traditional" Coast Salish leadership.[5]
Its primary purpose, however, is to suggest that the classical ethnographic under-
standings of the links between indigenous place and identity should be revisited,
and that our current historical understanding of the effects of newcomer incur-
sions into indigenous space need to be revised so that the earliest epidemics and
incursions of global capitalism can be regarded as precedented, and therefore rep-
resent less of a break with pre-contact history than previously assumed.

In 1936 the lower Fraser River Katzie shaman and tribal historian known
to non-Natives as Old Pierre shared with the anthropologist Diamond Jenness
a remarkable story describing how the various Coast Salish tribal communities
of the Puget Sound and Georgia Strait drainage basin had come to be where
they were. The "Lord Above" had decided that the lands were too crowded, and
so he sent a great rain: "It rained and rained without ceasing until the rivers
overflowed their banks, the plains flooded and the people fled for shelter to the
mountains, where they anchored their canoes to the summits with long ropes of
twisted cedar-boughs." While some lived to watch the waters eventually
recede, many did not. The raging waters caused the tethered canoes to crash
together and many people were drowned. Some canoes broke free from their
moorings and were swept away "far to the southward." According to Old
Pierre, where these canoes eventually rested became the displaced peoples' new
homelands: "The Kwikwitlam Indians in Washington are descendants of the

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5 See K.D.Tollefson, "The Snoqualmie: A Puget Sound Chiefdom," *Ethnology*, XXVI, no. 2
(1987): 121-36; Tollefson, "Political Organization of the Duwamish," *Ethnology*, XXIIX
(1989): 135-49, Tollefson, "In Defence of a Snoqualmie Political Chiefdom Model,"
Ethnohistory, 43 (1996): 145-71; W. Suttles, "They Recognize No Superior Chief: The Strait
of Juan de Fuca in the 1790's," in *Culturas de la Costa Noroeste de America*, ed. Jose Luis
Peset (Madrid: Turner, 1989), 251-64; B.G. Miller and D.L. Boxberger, "Creating Chiefdoms:
The Puget Sound Case," *Ethnohistory*, 41, no. 2 (1994): 267-69; Boxberger and Miller,
"Evolution or History? A Response to Tollefson," *Ethnohistory*, 44, no. 1 (1996): 135-7; and
J. Miller, "Commentary: Back to Basics: Chiefdoms in Puget Sound," *Ethnohistory*, 44, no. 2
(1997): 375-87.

Coquitlam Indians who drifted away from Golden-Ears, the Nooksack are descendants of Squamish Indians, and the Cowlitz are some Cowichan natives who were swept away from Mount Cowichan."[6]

Old Pierre's 1936 description of the fate of Coast Salish people swept away from their Fraser River-nested homelands by the great flood is not the only account of flood-induced relocation. Ethnographers working among the lower Fraser Salish in the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century collected several such accounts (See Map 2). In 1902 local ethnographer Charles Hill-Tout reported that one of his Kwantlen consultants had described a "great flood [that] overwhelmed the people and scattered the tribes. Then it was that the Nooksack tribe was parted from the Squamish, to whom they are regarded as belonging."[7] Hill-Tout learned that a branch of the Kwantlen became the northern-most Coast Salish speakers, the linguistically isolated Bella Coola (Nuxalk). Elder Bob Joe at Chilliwack described to the mid-century anthropologist Wilson Duff how "rafts holding people from Chehalis and Scowlitz on the Harrison River were tied to a peak on Sumas Mountain that broke off. The rafts floated southward, and the people became the Chehalis and Scowlitz tribes of Washington."[8] Yet another version provided by Elder Cornelius Kelleher to folklorist Norman Lerman in 1950 describes how upper class members of the Chehalis tribe were able to return to their home after the flood, whereas those people on the other raft were swept away and "never heard of again."[9] Lerman also heard from his informant Harry Uslick a more detailed version of the flood story that had been related through the generations from at least as far back as Uslick's great-great-great-grandfather. Uslick spoke of people being swept away and never heard from again, while others found themselves stranded in different parts of the broader Coast Salish territory, struggling to return to their devastated homes after the waters receded. Uslick began:

> Long ago … the people were nearly all drowned in a big, big water which flooded this country. It rained such a big rain that time. The people didn't care at first because they had seen big rains before. But this time the rivers and creeks could not take it away, so the water rose up and up until it reached our

6 Diamond Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, in *Anthropology in British Columbia — Memoirs 3*, ed. Wilson Duff (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 2. 1955), 33.

7 C. Hill-Tout, *The Salish People: The Local Contribution of Charles Hill-Tout, Vol. III: The Mainland Halkomelem*, ed. Ralph Maud (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978).

8 W. Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*. Memoir No. 1. (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, Anthropology in BC, 1952), 23.

9 Stó:lō Nation Archives (hereafter SNA), Chilliwack, B.C., Norman Hart Lerman, "Lower Fraser Indian Folktales Collected by Norman Lerman, 1950-1951," unpublished manuscript, n.d., 245-47).

1 Kwantlen to Bella Coola
   (Hill-Tout's consultant)

2 Coquitlam to Kwokwitlam
   (Old Pierre)

3 Squamish to Nooksack
   (Old Pierre) (Hill-Tout's
   consultant)

4 Cowichan to Cowlitz
   (Old Pierre)

5 Sumas to unknown
   (Harry Uslick)

6 Sumas to unknown
   (Dan Milo)

7 Chehalis (Can) to Chehalis
   (USA) (Bob Joe)

8 Scowlitz (Can) to Scowlitz
   (USA) (Bob Joe)

9 Chehalis to unknown
   (Cornelius Kolleher)

10 Sumas to Yale (Harry Uslick)
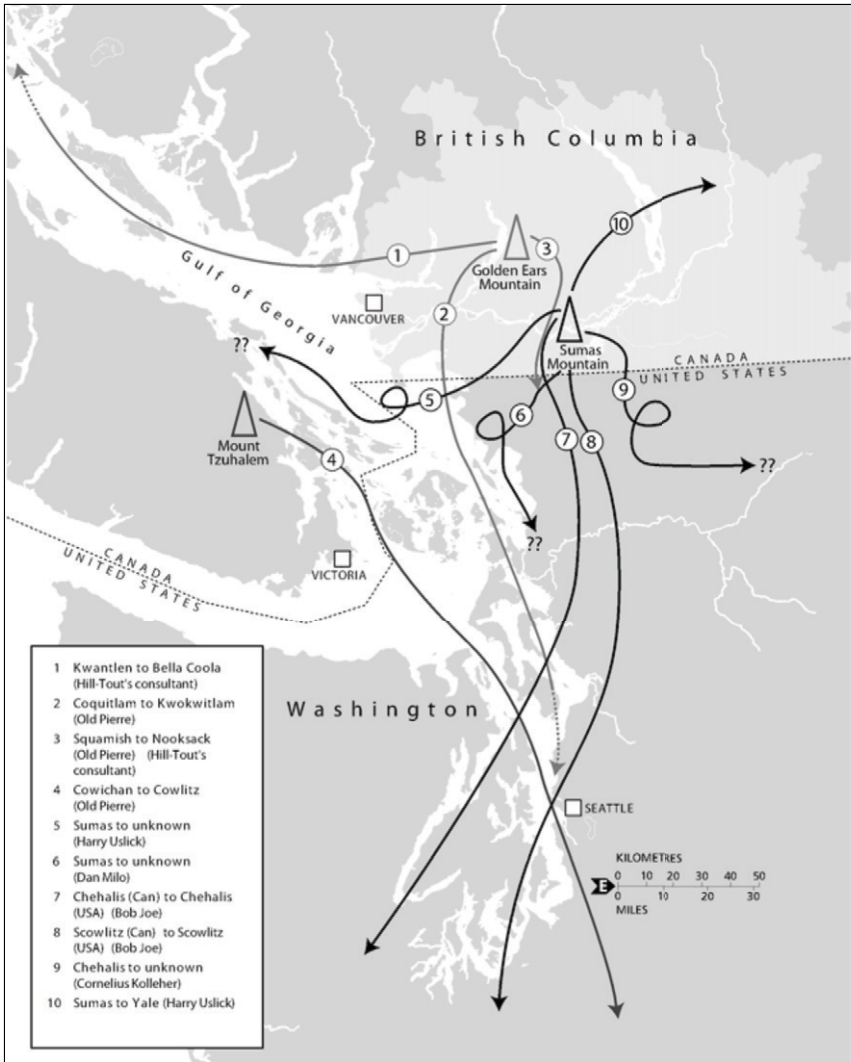
Map 2

houses. We[10] took our dried salmon and berries and moved to the mountains, but the water kept following us. We climbed higher and higher up the mountain but still the water kept coming after us.

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10 Often Coast Salish people telling stories of the ancient era speak in the present tense and use the first person pronoun "we." This habit may be indicative of the spiritual link which is believed to exist between people of different generations.

> So the greatest leaders called a council of the warriors and doctors on the high-est hill beyond our village. The council could see that if the water kept coming as it had this hill wouldn't be dry [for] very long. Everything kept drifting past, even the great cedar planks that we used to build the walls of the smoke houses [longhouses]. The leaders ordered the youngest man to swim out and gather all the cedar planks so to make two rafts from the house boards and piled all their provisions on it. Then they got on themselves.

Uslick then described how the water continued to rise until it eventually engulfed the local area. It was

> over the top of the place where they were on the highest hill behind the vil-lage. So we drifted around. Then a big wind came up washing a lot of the provisions away. Now for food we had to catch some of the animals that swam to the raft, looking to be saved. The two rafts got separated then, one of them drifted far until the leader saw a peak still out of the water, and the wind blew the raft straight to that peak.

The Uslick narrative goes on to describe how a contemporary traveller passing through the Fraser Canyon will notice a big mountain behind the town of Yale that looks like a "pointing thumb." It was on Pointing Thumb Mountain, Uslick explained, that the one raft eventually landed. There, the survivors took up residence in a cave:

> The people lived in a cave there and whenever they ate the dried salmon they took the sticks out and laid them on the side near the fire. Now, when you go to that place, you can see those sticks but you can't pick them up because they've gone to dust.

> It's been a long time, you see, since those people went up there to live, to get away from the flood.

Next, Uslick indicated the environmental devastation that occurred and pointed out that some rafts of people were swept away and their destination remained unknown:

> They had a hard time getting down and nearly starved. They ate the skins that they wore and what little fish they could get in the small pools. When they got back, there was nothing left of their homes. Even the house posts had fallen down in the mud. There was no sign of life and the people on the other raft were never heard of again.[11]

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11 Norman H. Lerman and Betty Keller, *Legends of the River People* (Vancouver: November House, 1976), 23-5.

For the contemporary Coast Salish people relating these stories it does not seem to matter that the current descendants of those allegedly swept away by the rising waters do not necessarily recognize or acknowledge their alleged role in the flood story, or that they might have origin stories of their own locating them in their current homeland since the beginning of time. What does matter is that the story exists, and if necessary it can be mobilized by anyone seeking to open a line of communication or build a relationship with the other group. Certainly, people from the Fraser Valley did not discuss (at least openly with me) the possibility that others elsewhere might have stories of their own that describe Fraser River communities as having been swept to their current village site from some far distant land during a great flood. These stories explain how certain clusters of affiliated people came to be where they are. Moreover, given the attributed social characteristics of the various tribal groups, and the strict inherited distinctions which are believed to divide the "worthless" class from the noble "worthy" class, people today still commonly use these stories to explain why certain clusters of people are the *way* they are.

Indeed, the Coast Salish acceptance of variation in different family-based versions of ancient stories easily allows a member from the supposed relocated community to hear a story describing their alleged movement without insult being taken. Instead, Coast Salish take it as a compliment — a statement of shared ancestry and common interest — and recognize it as an invitation to build (or rebuild) stronger connections based on a common identity derived from history. Nor do people dwell upon the fact that in the stories those who were washed away were usually described as having been less worthy than those who managed to stay. Rather, the principal purpose of relating such a story seems to be to identify distant relations and open lines of communication. In these contexts, negative or demeaning aspects of the story are generally not shared publicly for fear they would undermine the relationship building process.[12]

At a fundamental level, therefore, the flood narratives provide a basis for shared collective identities over vast geographical distances. The fact that some versions of the flood story, such as Uslick's, do not identify all the groups who were swept away, or where they landed, is not considered important. (Dan Milo's account likewise explains, "There's three canoes went lost from there; that broked off and nobody knows where they went

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12 Such information could be held in reserve and mobalized at a later date in order to provide a rationale for the relationship breaking down, should that occur. This practice illustrates the role of "private knowledge" in Coast Salish society as a tool for creating social divisions and cementing status and authority. This practice is discussed in Wayne Suttles, "Private Knoweldge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 60, no. 3 (June 1958): 497-507.

to."[13]) Rather, these stories are regarded as especially important as they open a door for acknowledging collective identity with practically any distant group with whom one has an interest. Within the Halkomelem Salish language exists the term siyá:ye, which is often translated simply as "friend or relative," but more accurately means "someone to whom I feel very close, and yet with whom I am unable to demonstrate any direct blood or marriage tie."[14] A siyá:ye is someone outside the standard kin and affine system with whom one wishes to establish and cement a relationship. In the current politically charged climate of Native-newcomer relations, such words, coupled with vague versions of the flood story, such as Uslick's and Milo's, have been referred to by Canadian mainland Coast Salish politicians while speaking to their colleagues on Vancouver Island or in the American territories of Puget Sound to rationalize and validate the construction of modern political alliances. In this context, the people who floated away from the mountains during the floods are regarded less as being lost and in need of repatriation and more as potential family who can be drawn on when collective action is regarded as useful against an external threat.

Eventful narratives such as the Great Flood stories complement yet another category of histories that within Coast Salish historical consciousness are regarded as having occurred during an even earlier era. These stories, likewise associated with exogenous events, also helped create a context that in the face of introduced disease and global market forces facilitated post-flood movements and reconstituted identity. Old Pierre explained that in this more ancient time heroic Sky-born "First People," such as Swaniset of the Katzie and the Transformers X̱exá:ls, were sent by the Creator and then journeyed throughout the Coast Salish world performing marvellous transformations as they "made the world right." Charles Hill-Tout's turn-of-the-twentieth-century Kwantlen consultants, August Sqtcten, Jason Allard, and Mrs. Elkins, explained that while the sky-born hero Swaniset was their tribe's first person, they also recognized certain earth-born ancestors as other legitimate "first people." One of these earthly men was particularly important in helping Coast Salish people deal with sudden disease-induced depopulation. His name was Skwelselem.

Skwelselem the First lived during the time of the great transformations. The Creator provided Skwelselem with all the tools and utensils required for living. Kwantlen people from near Fort Langley living in the early twentieth

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13 The flood story shared by Dan Milo does not specify exactly where people went, but clearly emphasizes that groups of people did go somewhere. Milo is quoted verbatim in Oliver Wells *The Chilliwack and their Neighbours*, eds. Ralph Maud and Brent Galloway. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 88. Milo shared the same story with CBC radio personality Imbert Orchard a few years later. See SNA, 96-SR11, Dan Milo, interview by Imbert Orchard, n.d.

14 Rosaleen George, personal communication with author, 1995; J. Miller, *Lushootseed Culture*, 111-29.

century cited an unbroken genealogical chain that stretched back nine generations to Skwelselem. It was through this chain that hereditary Kwantlen leadership was traced. It was during the life of Skwelselem and his sons and grandsons, as Hill-Tout recorded, that "certain important events" occurred — events which Coast Salish people use as metaphors for a variety of purposes. According to Hill-Tout's informants, during the time of Skwelselem the Second a "mighty conflagration" (which Hill-Tout thought might have referred to "some volcanic phenomenon") "spread over the whole earth" devastating the land and killing many of its inhabitants.[15] It was during the life of Skwelselem the Third that the Great Flood occurred, causing segments of the Squamish and other tribal communities to be separated from their Fraser River homeland and to develop autonomously elsewhere. Similarly, while Skwelselem the Fourth was living a "severe and prolonged famine, which lasted for many weeks, decimated the tribe." Hill-Tout recorded similar genealogical traditions and associated accounts of great calamities among the Squamish of North Vancouver and the other Coast Salish tribes with whom he worked.[16]

Within Coast Salish historical consciousness, accounts of such devastating and depopulating disasters as floods, fires, and famine explain and account for population movements and changes in group identities. The anthropologist Wayne Suttles discussed how the phenomenon of occasional food shortages played a central role in shaping classic Coast Salish culture. The failure of a salmon run, or even its tardy arrival in spring after winter stores of dried food had been exhausted, were serious matters. Storing food as a hedge against periodic shortages (which ranged from regular seasonal variation to devastating once-a-generation deprivations) may well have been the catalyst behind the classic quest for prestige that distinguished Northwest Coast potlatch society. And, as Suttles also pointed out, surviving and thriving in the face of periodic shortages required (in addition to sophisticated harvesting technology, ritual knowledge, an elaborate potlatch system of redistribution, and a society built around the quest for prestige) a method of acquiring and storing food. Additionally, thriving through periods of shortage required the development of mechanisms for forging social relationships through economic trade and exchange. These intertwined social and economic systems were based largely on marital rights to hereditarily controlled and regulated resources located at some distance from a person's winter settlement.[17]

Beyond emphasizing for each new generation the importance of preparing for food shortages, stories associated with famine also serve to explain for Coast Salish people how certain tribal communities came into existence, and

15 Hill-Tout, *The Salish People*, Vol. III, 70.

16 Ibid.

17 Suttles, "They Recognize No Superior Chief."

why those communities, while distinct, can only be understood in terms of inter-tribal relationships. Amy Cooper, a Coast Salish woman originally from Ohamil near Hope, married a Chilliwack man named William Commodore and later, after being widowed, married another Chilliwack man, Albert Cooper, who was a relative of her first husband. She lived most of her adult life on the Soowahlie reserve above Vedder Crossing. As a young woman in the early twentieth century she listened to her husband's tribal elders and half a century later shared those stories with local ethnographer, second generation pioneer resident, and friend, Oliver Wells. In 1962 she related to Wells a story of a great famine of Biblical proportions that simultaneously provides the context for, and accounts for, the subsequent development of the Soowahlie community:

> There was a famine … like in India and other places [where] they couldn't save anything. And they couldn't dig anything to put away … All that there was died off, and what didn't die off the bugs got …. And the … creeks there was so dry there, that the fish never came up.

So bad was the drought that,

> … according to the Soowahlies, everyone died but a woman …. There was nothing to eat; so she went and got cedar bark, and made herself a pair of corsets, like, and bound that up, and she was able to stand and breathe. And then she went down to a little creek … and what did she get? Minnows! …. And she got minnows. And that's how she lived. Then, when she got stronger, and the spring came and the roots came back and the other stuff there that they eat … she went back home and gathered up all the … skin and bones, and cleaned out the big long-house that she lived in.

The surviving woman was all alone. According to Mrs. Cooper,

> she didn't have a dog or she didn't have a man, woman or child to talk to. And she was all by herself till one day a man showed up. And he came from Lake Whatcom [via the Nooksack Tribe just south of the Canadian border]. He was the only one that survived over at Lake Whatcom. And they say that's where the Soowahlie people came from, from the man from Lake Whatcom and this woman from Soowahlie.[18] (See Map 3)

In Mrs. Cooper's interpretation of events, therefore, the contemporary Soowahlie community was not a primordial creation made at the beginning of time, but rather an historical amalgam of two people originally from different places. The narrative, and by extension the resulting community described in the story, are legitimized by virtue of containing Genesis-like features. As in the standard sto-

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18 Wells, *The Chilliwack and their Neighbours*, 50.

According to Amy Cooper, after "the famine" Soowahlie was repopulated by the lone surviving Soowahlie woman and a man from Nooksack.

According to Dan Milo, after the mysterious depopulating event, a surviving boy from Kw'ekw'e'l:qw and girl from Slali:ts moved to Leq'a:mel. It is from Leq'a:mel that the Halkomelem language spread to all Stó:lá.

Le'a:mel
(Nicomen Island)
Fraser River

Creek where starving woman caught minnows

Sumas Mountain

Sumas Lake

Slali:ts
(Yarrow)

Kw'ekw'e'l:qw
(Kilgard / Sumas)

X

Soowahlie   Chilliwack River

Cultus Lake

0   KILOMETRES   5
0   MILES   5

Contemporary Canada / United States Boundary

Lake Whatcom & Nooksack River

Map 3

ries of the Transformers and Sky-born founders of most Coast Salish communities, the Soowahlie famine story explains an important historical event — the coming together of remnants of two older communities to create a new one — in terms that are similar to, and informed by, the historical precedent of the earlier creation stories.

In her continuing conversation with Wells, Mrs. Cooper explained the contemporary significance of the story to collective identities. At that time (the winter of 1962) a dispute occurred among the Nooksack people as to who

among their community should carry the Lake Whatcom man's name. Mrs. Cooper had no intention of directly involving herself in this dispute. However, she did demonstrate her conviction that the man's name belonged to the 'new' Soowahlie people as much as the 'old' Nooksack, and, implicitly, that the two communities were really one and the same. With the threatened return of the man's name to Nooksack, a vital part of Soowahlie history (and by extension, Chilliwack and broader Coast Salish history) was being removed and potentially lost: the man had "come to Soowahlie, and he died and he was buried in Soowahlie, and that's where the generation comes from."[19]

As Mrs. Cooper's story illustrates, there is a long history of Coast Salish collective identities disappearing and then others being born or reborn in new form. Prior to the great famine a Soowahlie community already existed — or at least a settlement with people existed on that spot. The name Soowahlie translates as "melting away," a direct reference to the famine itself and the fact that "the people here once died in great numbers."[20] What the original pre-famine community was, and its relationship to other settlements and clusters of people is, is now uncertain; but, undoubtedly, such history once existed. Indeed, it may still exist in Chilliwack oral histories that have not yet been revealed to outsiders. What was important to Mrs. Cooper's generation, or at least for the elderly people from whom she learned the story, was that the new Soowahlie community was an amalgamation of an older resident stock and new blood from Nooksack. Some oral traditions explain that the Chilliwack tribe, of which Soowahlie is a part, were originally endogamous, preferring to marry within their own community.[21] Within the indigenous historical consciousness, therefore, the precipitating event of the famine explains and accounts for changes in social customs and practices, and perhaps more importantly, sets an historical precedent allowing subsequent generations to change and adapt to new circumstances. Massive death, survivor dispersal, and assistance received from a distant place, together created a context for the formation of a new identity stemming from inter-community amalgamation. In this way, identity, history, and place are all linked and serve to continually inform one another.

Dan Milo, at the age of ninety-five in 1962, shared with Oliver Wells a story similar to the one related by Mrs. Cooper. Milo's narrative describes not only an unidentified calamity that wiped out most of the lower Fraser River's Aboriginal population, but movements and a series of community amalgamations and subsequent fractures that account for the existence of the

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19 Ibid., 51.

20 Hill-Tout *The Salish People*, Vol. III, 41.

21 Robert "Bob" Joe asserted that this was previously the Chilliwack custom (see SNA, Robert Joe, interview with Oliver Wells, 16 January 1964). Hill-Tout collected the same information over half a century earlier from his Chilliwack consultants. See Hill-Tout, *The Salish People*, Vol. III, 46.

linguistic unity among the lower Fraser River Salish people and, by extension, all the factors of pan-tribal unity stemming from a common language:

> Well, there was a boy from Kilgard.[22] In them days they used to call that place Semá:th. That means[23] 'Sumas.' Well, that one boy was left by himself. All his people died. So he went home. And the next morning he made up his mind to come over there and see who was living at Yarrow,[24] where he saw that smoke coming out of a big house where there was a lot of Indians living. When he come there, he went right into the house there. There was just one girl that was left, after she had all the bodies put away. So that is the first time he ever saw this girl. So he got acquainted with her. So he got real acquainted, and they got married right there. So they stayed together. And that's where the language that the Indians are using started from. They went over to Nicomen [Leq'á:mel],[25] where there's a lot of Indians there. That was the only people that used that language that the Indians are using now, today .… They come home. They raised children, and that's how the people began to speak that Halq'eméylem language.[26] (See Map 3)

Milo's story refers to the indigenous etymological understanding of the word Halq'eméylem, which he and others have translated as the "language of Leq'á:mel."[27] Implicit in the story is the knowledge that it was not only the two Sumas settlements that experienced the sudden depopulation, but all Salish communities along the lower Fraser river. Following the mysterious depopulating event, people from the previously more distinct Coast Salish tribal groups, with their individual languages, came together at Leq'á:mel, in the geographic centre of lower Fraser River Salish territory. There, they amalgamated to become a single people speaking a single language. They subsequently re-fractured to re-establish distinct tribal communities that remained linked in a manner previously impossible by virtue of a shared language and the common experience of surviving the depopulation.

The existence of flood stories, and narratives, such as Mrs. Cooper's and Dan

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22 Kw'ekw'e'i:qw is a Sumas settlement just west of Sumas Lake.

23 By which Milo means, "has been rendered by Europeans as."

24 Yarrow is the modern European name for a town built near the former site of Sali:ts, a Sumas settlement on the south east side of Sumas Lake.

25 On Nicomen Island in the Fraser River immediately north of Sumas.

26 Wells, *The Chilliwack and their Neighbours,* 40.

27 Robert Joe provided Duff with the same translation. See SNA, Wilson Duff fonds, Book 3, 1950, unpublished fieldnotes, 41. Interestingly, linguist Brent Galloway (personal communication with author, 1995) believes the word Leq'a:mel translates as "level place" or "meeting place." Often folk etymologies emphasize the significance of a name, that is, its historical meaning or significance, over what linguists feel is the genuine etymological root of the word. In this case, however, Galloway's second translation, "meeting place," would fit with the story of the locale becoming the place where survivors gathered after the mysterious depopulating event. Galloway records the word for "visiting one another" as la:leq'el, which appears to be derived from the same proto-Salish root.

Milo's, account of the calamities that wiped out most of the region's population, have collectively created an historiographical context through which lower Fraser Coast Salish people have been prepared for similar experiences within their own lives — experiences increasingly associated with modernity and globalization. Events and the recorded responses of people to them provide successive generations with a series of precedents, historical examples, and human responses upon which they model their own behaviour. Perhaps this is what Marshall Sahlins meant when he wrote "History is ordered by significance; peoples' response to and interpretation of events are governed by the logic of the structures they unwittingly reproduce; and in so doing, transform."[28] Thus, the devastating smallpox epidemic of the late eighteenth century, arriving through Native trade networks at least a decade in advance of actual European visitors and, therefore, completely unprecedented in terms of its biological expression, was not incomprehensible in terms of its demographic effects, nor was the social response without indigenous precedent.

Most of the scholarly discussion concerning smallpox epidemics on the Northwest Coast has focussed on the question of time (When did the epidemics occur?) and demographic effect (What was the fatality rate?).[29] Less attention has been directed toward assessing the cultural responses and social effects.[30] Robert Boyd maintains that the first virgin-soil smallpox epidemic probably reached the Coast Salish in the late 1770s via either European ships visiting the west coast of Vancouver Island in the wake of Juan Perez and James Cook's expeditions, or possibly (though less likely) through indigenous trade networks from Kamchatka and Alaska, where Russian fur traders had introduced the disease in 1769. Based largely on Wilson Duff's reading of Old Pierre's conversations with Jenness, Boyd maintains that a second smallpox epidemic probably struck the region around 1801[31] — a view that appears to have been accepted by Suttles.[32]

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28 Sahlins, "The Return of the Event," 21.

29 The leading figures in this debate have been Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999) and Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*. Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994) and James Gibson, "Smallpox on the Northwest Coast, 1835-1838," *BC Studies* 56 (1982/1983): 61-81, have also made significant contributions to the discussion.

30 See G.M. Guilmet, R.T. Boyd, etal., "The Legacy of Introduced Disease: The Southern Coast Salish," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15, no. 4 (1991): 1-32. As Boyd points out, however, what we know about the effect of introduced disease and population decline on Northwest Coast cultural systems remains largely speculative. See R. Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 276-78.

31 Ibid., 38-9.

32 W. Suttles, "Introduction" in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 7, The Northwest Coast*, ed. W. Suttles (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1990); and Suttles, "The Ethnographic Significance of the Fort Langley Journals," in *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30,* ed. Morag MacLachlan (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 163-212.

PRECEDENT AND THE ABORIGINAL RESPONSE TO GLOBAL INCURSIONS:
SMALLPOX AND IDENTITY REFORMATION AMONG THE COAST SALISH

Historical geographer Cole Harris's recent review of extant European explorers' accounts and Coast Salish oral histories led him to conclude that the evidence better supports a single epidemic in 1782. Elsewhere, having reviewed the same literature and documents, I have indicated my agreement with Harris,[33] although I am willing to accept the possibility that a second, less virulent epidemic (perhaps variola minor or measles) may have followed in the wake of the 1782 epidemic with less devastating effects. For the purposes of this article, however, the timing of the epidemic is less important than its impact on Aboriginal concepts of self as reflected in reshaped collective identities resulting from depopulation and the consolidation of what were previously more scattered settlements. Within Coast Salish historical consciousness, the arrival of smallpox was an historic event with profound effects.

Significantly, it has been a common practice of many of those studying introduced disease and depopulation to interpret "mythic" accounts of devastating historical events (such as famine stories and accounts of supernatural monsters) as being indigenous accounts of what were most likely early epidemics.[34] It is, of course, reasonable to expect people to interpret new things within existing paradigms;[35] however, it is important to consider that within the indigenous Lower Fraser Coast Salish mind the sxwõxwiyám (ancient or "myth-age" stories) are generally distinguished from the historical accounts of the arrival of smallpox — even accounts that describe smallpox as arriving prior to the physical visitation of Europeans. This distinction suggests that while the Aboriginal population initially interpreted the disease as something else (as either a disruption in the spirit world, or within the discourse of ancient myths), their subsequent experience with identifiable epidemics and the Europeans who carried the disease enabled them to reconsider and correct earlier interpretations within their own historical record. Alternatively, it is reasonable to think that by 1782 they would have acquired sufficient informa-

33 Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2001), 76-9.
34 Harris, for example, interprets the Kwantlen Salish story of the attack on their community by a dragon whose breath caused "sores" to break out as a metaphor for smallpox. See *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, 6-7.
35 Much of the most interesting analysis in this regard has focused on Aboriginal interpretations of Europeans at first contact. Sahlins, for example, argues the Hawaiian people originally interpreted the British explorer Captain James Cook as the god Lono. Wendy Wickwire has advanced essentially the same interpretation for the Nlakapamux in their initial interpretation of the Northwest Company explorer Simon Fraser as the returning Transformer. See Wendy Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlakapamux Contact Narratives," Canadian Historical Review, LXXV, no. 1 (March 1994): 1-20. I have personally encountered a number of lower Fraser Salish oral histories which suggest that their ancestors initially interpreted Fraser as the returning transformer X̱a:ls. See Sahlins, *How Natives Think: About Captain Cook for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

tion about Europeans and their diseases through inter-tribal communication networks to give them adequate knowledge to distinguish between smallpox and earlier "natural" calamities. Certainly, this view is what a close reading of the oral history reveals.

Old Pierre, Diamond Jenness's Katzie consultant, and each of Hill-Tout's Fraser River Salish consultants clearly distinguished the first smallpox epidemic from earlier disasters, providing historical narratives that unfolded within a strict chronology that, contrary to many popular assumptions about the non-linear nature of Aboriginal historical consciousness, was sequentially developed.[36] Old Pierre related how human history was divided into a series of eras, each punctuated by significant historical happenings or events. In Pierre's rendition of history, the "Lord Above" first created an imperfect, incomplete, world; then came the ages of the Sky-born transformers, such as Swaniset, followed by the second generation of Transformers, principally the siblings known as X̱exá:ls, who "made the world right." It was many generations later that the great flood occurred, and then many generations after the flood that "the Indians multiplied again," becoming "too numerous in the land." It was at this point, "during a certain year," that the snow began to fall so steadily that for three months people were trapped in their longhouses, living exclusively on their dwindling stores of dried food. When they were finally able to dig themselves free, they were compelled to scavenge dead birds and animals for sustenance while they awaited the return of the eulachon to the river. Old Pierre explained, it was "nine months before the snow melted completely from the

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36 Most of the early Coast Salish genealogies collected by anthropologists record only eight or nine generations reaching back from the present to the beginning of time. This caused Sally Snyder to speculate that the Coast Salish regarded history as cyclical; that each seven or eight generations history began over again with the first generation. See Saay Snyder, "Skagit Society and its Existential Basis: An Ethnofolkloristic Reconstruction." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1964), 29. Hill-Tout considered the nine generation genealogies as evidence that the Coast Salish were relatively recent immigrants to the region. He felt that the spectacular stories of the actions of the "first people" were really glorified accounts of the actions of the first generation of Coast Salish conquerors, who wrested the territory from its earlier inhabitants. Hill-Tout's thesis has been largely discounted by subsequent anthropologists, who argue for a great antiquity in Coast Salish occupation of the region, whereas Snyder's remains largely unexplored by others. While her thesis is possible, the fact remains that neither her Aboriginal consultants, nor anyone else has ever interpreted Salish history as cyclical, that is, they never discussed or described it as being a repetitive narrative that began anew each eight or nine generations. Rather, they presented it as a lineal narrative with a fixed beginning and a fixed end. However, the fact that Halq'emeylem kin terms extend through time for a maximum of seven generations in either direction from the person using them, coupled with the fact that names and aspects of identity are regarded as hereditary, may be suggestive of a repetitive view of history. For a controversial discussion of the place of cyclical thinking among contemporary Aboriginal people see Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

house tops," during which time "half the Indians died of starvation." It was many generations after this great snow that "the people again multiplied for a third time." Then it was that the smallpox swept into their territory and killed off the majority of the people:

> News reached them from the east that a great sickness was travelling over the land, a sickness that no medicine could cure, and no person escape. Terrified, they held council with one another and decided to send their wives, with half the children, to their parents' homes, so that every adult might die in the place where he or she was raised. Then the wind carried the smallpox sickness among them. Some crawled away into the woods to die; many died in their homes. Altogether about three-quarters of the Indians perished ….

> If you dig to-day on the site of any of the old villages you will uncover countless bones, the remains of the Indians who perished during this epidemic of smallpox. Not many years later Europeans appeared on the Fraser, and their coming ushered in a new era.[37]

Unknown to Old Pierre, evidence of the precipitous event that ushered in the new era was also observed and described by the officers and men on board HMS *Discovery* and HMS *Chatham*, as they sailed through the Coast Salish waters of Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia in 1792 under the command of Captain George Vancouver. The British sailors described numerous abandoned Coast Salish settlements that were littered with the bones of what were likely smallpox victims:

> In all our excursions, particularly those in the neighbourhood of Port Discovery, the skulls, limbs, ribs, and backbones or some other vestige of the human body were found in many places promiscuously scattered about the beach, in great numbers. Similar relics were also frequently met with during our surveys with the boats. And I was informed by the officers that in their several perambulations, the like appearances had presented themselves so repeatedly, and in such abundance, as to produce an idea that the environs of Port Discovery were a general cemetery for the whole of the surrounding country.[38]

Vancouver described Coast Salish territory as "nearly destitute of inhabitants"[39] though he astutely recognized that it had recently "been infinitely more populous." Throughout Puget Sound and Georgia Strait he encountered numerous abandoned settlements, "Each of [which] … was nearly, if not quite, equal

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37 Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian,* 34.
38 George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Around the World, 1791-1795*, ed. W.K. Lamb (London: The Hakluit Society, 1984), 538.
39 Ibid., 517.

to contain all the scattered inhabitants we saw [in Puget Sound]." He judged the cause of this massive depopulation (calculated to have swept through the region only a few years earlier[40]) to have been smallpox rather than warfare on account of so few men having battle scars, and so many people suffering the permanent disfigurement of the pox: "Several of their stoutest men having been observed perfectly naked, and contrary to what might have been expected of rude nations habituated to warfare, their skins were mostly unblemished by scars, excepting such as the smallpox seemed to have occasioned; a disease which there is great reason to believe is very fatal amongst them."[41] In a later journal entry he recorded, "This deplorable disease is not only very common, but it is greatly to be apprehended is very fatal amongst them, as its indelible marks were seen on many, and several had lost the sight of one eye, which was remarked to be generally the left, owing most likely to the virulent effects of this baneful disorder."[42]

Other accounts of the epidemic, remembered through oral traditions, are just as horrific. Charles Hill-Tout, interviewing an aged Squamish historian at the close of the nineteenth century, learned that many generations after the great flood and the great winter, a new "dreadful misfortune befell" the Coast Salish people, ushering in a "time of sickness and distress:"

> A dreadful skin disease, loathsome to look upon, broke out upon all alike. None were spared. Men, women and children sickened, took the disease and died in agony by the hundreds so that when the spring arrived and fresh food was procurable, there was scarcely a person left of all their numbers to get it. Camp after camp, village after village, was left desolate. The remains of which, said the old man, in answer to my queries on his head, are found today in the old camp sites or midden-heaps over which the forest has been growing for so many generations.[43]

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40 That disease had decimated the population only a few years before Vancouver's arrival is evident from his observation that "the habitations had now fallen into decay; their inside, as well as a small surrounding space that appeared to have been formerly occupied, were over-run with weeds; amongst which were found several human skulls, and other bones, promiscuously scattered about," *A Voyage of Discovery*, 516-17. On other occasions he described the extent of the vegetation that had encroached on the former living spaces in terms which perhaps better indicate that several years had passed since the depopulating event: "nothing but the smaller shrubs and plants has yet been able to rear their heads," 538.

41 Ibid., 540.

42 Ibid., 528. A few days later, while travelling northward along the east coast of Puget Sound, Vancouver recorded that among the people he encountered "most had lost their right eye, and were much pitted with smallpox," ibid., 559.

43 Hill-Tout, T*he Salish People: The Local Contribution of Charles Hill-Tout, Vol. II: The Squamish and the Lillooet*, ed. Ralph Maud (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978), 22.

Hill-Tout himself subsequently conducted the first methodical archaeological examinations of some of these forest-covered ancient burials.[44]

Along the same lines, Albert Louie, an Elder living in the central Fraser Valley in the 1960s, explained to Oliver Wells that when the first smallpox epidemic reached the Lower Fraser River, "It killed, oh, half the Indians all around the Fraser River there."[45] More recently Albert "Sonny" McHalsie has on numerous occasions related how he remembers his Elder, Evangeline Pete, explaining to him that when smallpox struck a community near Hope it killed at least twenty-five people each day; the bodies were placed inside pit houses and set on fire. From that time onward, McHalsie learned, the site was known as Sxwóxwiymelh, which translates as "a lot of people died at once."[46] In 1993 Jimmie Charlie of Chehalis, then eighty-nine years old, explained to me that a site near the junction of the Chehalis and Harrison River is known as Smimstiyexwála ("people container") because it was there that people interred the bodies of relatives and neighbours during the first smallpox epidemic.[47] At the entrance to the Fraser Canyon near the town of Yale are other sites where smallpox victims were buried in their pit houses.[48] Similar stories exist throughout the broader region.[49]

Nothing illustrates the consequences of North America's induction into a global system of communication and exchange as clearly as the demographic catastrophe associated with smallpox. Although the oral traditions and associated explorers' accounts perhaps speak most forcefully of the human losses, they also tell of the actions of survivors who struggled to rebuild an ordered society. For guidance, people turned to the wisdom of their ancestors. Within the remembered ancient narratives the pox-scarred generation of the late eighteenth century found solace in the accounts of their predecessors' migratory responses to floors, famines, and deadly snows. As Old Pierre's narrative demonstrates, movements across the Coast Salish geography actually began immediately prior to the large-scale deaths when married women left their pox-infected husbands' settlements to return to the place of their birth to die. Jay

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44 Hill-Tout, "Prehistoric Burial Mounds of British Columbia," *Museum and Art Notes* 5 (December 1930): 120-26; and Hill-Tout, "The Great Fraser Midden," *Museum and Art Notes* 5 (September 1930): 75-83.

45 SNA, Albert Louie, interview by Oliver Wells, 28 July 1965.

46 McHalsie, Sonny, "Halqemeylem Place Names in Stó:lō Territory," in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Calrson, 150.

47 Jimmie Charlie, personal communication with author, 1993.

48 SNA, Jimmie Peters, interview by Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalsie, 29 September 1986.

49 Cole Harris documents the evidence of early disease extensively. See Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia,* 3-30. See also, Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 38-58. In addition, lower Fraser River Salish Elders Elizabeth Herrling and Rosaleen George, dedicated participants in the Halq'emeylem language revival program, regularly insist that almost every village has a story of depopulation resulting from smallpox, but that only a few resulted in the name of a place being changed to reflect that history.

Miller suggests that in the face of illness Coast Salish people sought the safety of their home communities and the associated spirit forces who resided there.[50]

Ethnographers have long been aware of the prominence of migration stories within Northwest Coast indigenous oral histories, but until recently little energy has been directed towards understanding their social and cultural import or their historical significance. Among the first to identify movement as an ethnographic/historical issue was geologist and early Canadian ethnographer, George Dawson. In 1885, upon visiting the Coast Salish's northern neighbours, the Kwakwakawakw, he noted:

> When small-pox first ravaged the coast, after the coming of whites,[51] the Indians were not only much reduced in numbers, but became scattered, and new combinations were probably formed subsequently; while tribes and portions of tribes, once forming distinct village communities, drew together for mutual protection, when their numbers became small.[52]

Robert Boyd has recently documented the process of village abandonment and survivor consolidation following early contact-era epidemics among the Haida on the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Nuxalk of the mid-British Columbian coast, and the Chinook along the lower Columbia River.[53] What remains unexplored are the implications of such migrations for changes in indigenous social structures and the formation or reformation of collective identities, as well as the role such movements play in Aboriginal understandings of their own history. Moreover, Boyd's analysis of settlement abandonment does not include the Coast Salish.

Lower Fraser River Coast Salish oral history is rife with accounts of smallpox-induced population movements similar to those mentioned over a century ago by Dawson for the Kwakwakawakw. Old Pierre relates how his great-grandfather happened to be roaming in the mountains when the epidemic broke out:

> … for his wife had recently given birth to twins, and, according to custom, both parents and children had to remain in isolation for several months. The children were just beginning to walk when he returned to his village at the entrance to Pitt Lake, knowing nothing of the calamity that had overtaken its

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50 Miller, *Lushootseed Culture,* 132.

51 Early explorers and fur traders' ship's logs suggest that the Kwakwakawakw escaped the first smallpox epidemic. Their experience with the disease was, therefore, within the period when they would have had no doubt that the Europeans were the source of their disaster.

52 G. Dawson, "Notes and Observations on the Qwakiool People of the Northern Part of Vancouver Island and Adjacent Coasts, Made During the Summer of 1885," in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,* 11, Reprint (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1973), 4.

53 Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence,* chapters 8 and 9.

inhabitants. All his kinsmen and relatives lay dead inside their homes; only in one house did there survive a baby boy, who was vainly sucking at its dead mother's breast. They rescued the child, burned all the houses, together with the corpses that lay inside them, and *built a new home for themselves several miles away*.[54]

Old Pierre's son Simon, working with the anthropologist Wayne Suttles in 1952, explained that several settlements and at least two complete tribal groups had been "wiped out, or nearly so, by smallpox before Fort Langley was founded [in 1827]."[55] These included the settlements of "snakwaya at Derby … Skweelic on Bedford Channel north of the mouth of the Salmon River, [which were the main settlements of the Snokomish tribe] the Q'ó:leq' [Whonnock tribe] at the mouth of the Whonnock River, the sx̲a'yeqs [tribe] at Ruskin at the mouth of the Stave River, and the X̲at'seq [tribe] at Hatzic."[56] From a Semiahmoo consultant at Lummi, Suttles also learned that a tribe called Snokomish, which occupied Mud Bay, and the Nicomekl-Salmon River portage system leading to the village of Snakwaya on the Fraser River at Derby Reach, had also been "wiped out by smallpox."[57] Old Pierre listed for Jenness an additional place, called "Hazelberries" in English, just north of Townsend Station near the mouth of the Fraser River, as still another settlement "whose inhabitants perished in the great smallpox epidemic."[58] The disappearance of people from these and other sites, either through mass death or resulting from women and half their children fleeing to the settlement of the mother's birth, created population vacuums within the Coast Salish universe.

Initially, it appears, survivors gathered primarily at what had previously been the most densely populated settlement sites at or near the junctions of the Fraser River and its tributaries. Smaller outlying villages and camps or hamlets located up the tributary watersheds were largely abandoned. The Fraser River Salish world thus changed from one in which each tribe was characterized by a fairly populous central town surrounded by a series of smaller affiliated outlying villages and hamlets, to one where most of the smaller settlements were abandoned and survivors clustered in what had been the tribal core settlements. Smaller tribes, unable to sustain themselves, often disappeared altogether with whatever survivors might remain seeking refuge with relatives in neighbouring centres. Later, as the demographics stabilized, and possibly even began to temporarily rebound, people took advantage of the opportunities the depopulation

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54   Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian,* 34.
55   W. Suttles, *Katzie Ethnographic Notes*, Memoir No. 2 (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, Anthropology in British Columbia, 1955), 12.
56   Ibid.
57   Ibid.
58   Jenness, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence,* 57.

presented to migrate and establish themselves in places formerly occupied by others.

The consolidation of survivors happened first. While detailed information is not available for all regions, the evidence that does exist for certain areas along the lower Fraser River paints a vivid picture of settlement and collective identity reformulation. For example, as Old Pierre explained, "several small settlements at the mouth of the Fraser River merged with the Musqueam, but in earlier times they were quite separate."[59] Previously, these separate communities may have been considered distinct tribes, for each had received a special and distinct ritual from the "Lord Above."[60] On the Alouette River the survivors of another community under the hereditary leadership of Cilecten were so reduced in numbers that both they and their funerary ritual "merged with the Katzie."[61] What had been southern Snokomish territory around Boundary Bay was, according Suttles' Lummi consultant, subsequently occupied by the Semiahmoo "who had intermarried with them."[62] Northern Snokomish lands at Derby Reach on the Fraser River eventually fell under the influence of the Kwantlen, and ultimately became the site where the Hudson's Bay Company established the first Fort Langley in 1827.[63]

Farther upriver Charles Hill-Tout recorded from his Lillooet consultant that the headwaters of Harrison Lake and the lower reaches of the Lillooet River were formerly occupied by Halq'eméylem speakers. The Lillooet who occupied the area after the mid-nineteenth century had moved into the region to take advantage of opportunities presented by the 1858 gold rush and the establishment of a European transportation centre at Port Douglas. Corroborating this interpretation of migratory history are the Halq'eméylem place names Hill-Tout recorded for the region.[64] Living Coast Salish, such as Matilda Gutierrez, who was trained as a young girl to become a historian[65] and

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59 Ibid., 72.

60 Ibid., 71.

61 Ibid.

62 Suttles, *Katzie Ethnographic Notes,* 12. This is also related in more detail by Boyd, 43, who quotes Suttles' field notes verbatim.

63 MacLachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals,* 28.

64 Hill-Tout, *The Salish People*, Vol. II., 100.

65 Mrs. Matilda "Tilly" Gutierrez as a young girl achieving her first menses, was taken by her Elders and instructed to spend an entire night alone sitting on a site known as Th'exelis ("gritting his teeth") located at the edge of the Fraser River near Yale. It was a site where the transformer Xa:ls had himself once sat while engaged in a spiritual confrontation with a shaman on the other side of the river. Mrs. Gutierrez was instructed to contemplate the stories of the beginning of time, and thereafter received ongoing training in how to relate the various narratives of lower Fraser aboriginal history. To this day, she is sought after by Natives and non-Natives alike as an expert on both the content and meaning of numerous ancient historical narratives. Mrs. Gutierrez first related to me the story of her training in the summer of 1992.

who is one of less than a dozen remaining fluent aboriginal speakers,[66] remembers being told that the region was formerly occupied by the St'qwó:mpth people ("those who speak our language"), but that they were all killed by the smallpox.[67] Incursions by Lillooet people into what had formerly been held by the Halq'eméylem speakers affected settlement patterns and precipitated population migrations many kilometres south of the area that was eventually consolidated as Lillooet territory in the 1860s. During the previous generation (circa 1820 to 1845), the Lillooet embarked on a series of violent raids down Harrison Lake against the inhabitants of a settlement on the north end of Seabird Island known as Sq'ewqéyl. To protect themselves, the *Sq'ewqéyl* residents moved across and slightly down the Fraser River to Skw'átets, a site safe from northern raiders who would have had to leave their canoes on the other side of the Hick's Lake portage on Harrison Lake.[68]

The region still farther up the Fraser River, between what is now Agassiz and Hope, appears to have followed the same pattern of depopulation and emigration. In addition to Sx̱wóx̱wiymelh ("a lot of people died at once") other settlements, such as the one now referred to as Ruby Creek, were likewise abandoned by whatever survivors lived through the horror of the smallpox epidemic.[69] In 1952 Wilson Duff interpreted this particular stretch of the river as having been "characterized by an internal fluidity of population … in pre-white times,"[70] and while I agree this was generally true during the early nineteenth century, it appears that the recorded mobility of residents was much less a natural state of affairs, as Duff implies, than it was a series of adjustments being worked out in the wake of smallpox-induced depopulation. Indeed, Duff's consultants Edmund Lorenzetto and August Jim both claimed that the sites of Ohamil and Skw'átets were vacant prior to the early-to-mid-nineteenth century when the emigrants from Alámex and Sq'ewqéyl occupied them.[71]

In a similar vein, Wilson Duff learned from a Musqueam consultant that the original inhabitants of Indian Arm (at the head of Burrard Inlet immediately north of the Fraser River and near the present day city of Vancouver) had been Halkomelem speakers known by the name Tamtami'uxwtan. These people, dis-

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66 In 1993 the Stó:lō Tribal Council conducted a study which found only eight people could fluently speak the Upriver Halq'eméylem dialect. Even these fluent people humbly acknowledged that their command of the language was only a fraction of what the fluent speakers of the previous generation had been.

67 Mrs. Gutierrez has related this story to the author on numerous occasions.

68 This migration is discussed in W. Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley,* (Victoria: British Columbia Provinvial Museum, Anthropology in British Columbia, 1952), 40. See also, National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), RG 10, reel C-12144, Vol. 7859, file 30165-5(1) Skw'atets Indians (1918), Letter to H. Graham, Chilliwack, 6 December 1918.

69 Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 41.

70 Ibid., 40.

71 Ibid.

tinct from the contemporary Squamish occupants of the central and lower reaches of Burrard Inlet, were "closely allied with the Musqueam," but, like so many of the small tribal communities along the lower Fraser River, appear to have been wiped out by the earliest smallpox epidemic.[72] What was formerly Tamtami'uxwtan territory appears to have become the homeland of the Tsleil-Waututh tribe, who maintain a historical narrative of their contemporary community being an amalgamation of an original remnant population (likely the Tamtami'uxwtan) supplemented by new blood from afar. In a history of tribal origins provided by Tsleil-Waututh Chief Dan George,[73] we learn that great misfortune befell the original community resulting in the Chief's son, Wautsauk, being orphaned and raised by a female wolf. Ultimately, as a young man, Wautsauk wanted to find a "mate of his own kind." To accomplish this he made an arduous journey to a distant land: "Travelling up the Indian River, over the mountains to the canyon of the Fraser River, he found a bride among the people there. They came back to the Inlet and started to build our tribe."[74] In his way, the Tsleil-Waututh, like so many other Salish communities, trace their origins to the coming together of what had been two distinct communities following a crisis. In this case, the communities appear to have been a remnant resident Halkomelem group and Interior Salish Lillooet people from the middle Fraser River region.

According to traditions, Wautsauk was still Chief of his community when Captain Vancouver sailed into Indian Arm a decade after the first smallpox epidemic.[75] At that time, according to Dan George, the main Tsleil-Waututh settlement was near the present site of Belcarra and smaller camps were situated near the mouths of streams draining into Indian Arm. After Wautsauk's death in the "late 1700's," his son inherited his name, becoming Wautsauk the Second. This second-generation Tsleil-Waututh leader is supposed to have died about 1840,[76] which would date his life to the second decade of Hudson's Bay Company fur trade operations.

The snippets of oral histories recorded by westerners in the twentieth century provide only glimpses of the total picture of post-smallpox era resettlement. As a result, many of the early migrations have been misunder-

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72 Significantly, Duff discusses the Tamtami'uxwtan only in his unpublished MA thesis. See W. Duff, "The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia," (MA thesis, University of Washington, 1952), 37.

73 Chief Dan George is possibly best known among non-Natives as Dustin Hoffman's character's Indian "grandfather" in the movie *Little Big Man*, and as Clint Eastwood's companion and comic foil in *The Outlaw Jose Wales*.

74 Dawn Sparks and Martha Border, *Echoes Across the Inlet* (Deep Cove, B.C.: Deep Cove and Area Heritage Association, 1989), 1.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

stood and wrongly, or excessively, attributed to forces associated with the rise of global capitalism, and in particular, the economic incentives associated with the establishment of Fort Langley.[77] This view is not to deny that Hudson's Bay Company posts such as Langley acted as a magnet and drew certain Salish settlements more closely into their economic orbit (the Kwantlen tribe in particular), but it is important to realize that the migrations previously attributed to the establishment of the fort were in fact well underway before the Hudson's Bay Company's arrival, and largely the result of earlier disease-induced depopulation. Global market economies simply accelerated the re-settlement process.

The Kwantlen, one of the most prominent lower Fraser River Salish tribes discussed in the records of early European fur traders, have a history replete with relocation and movement, as well as tribal fracture, amalgamation, and absorption, making their collective history among the most interesting and better documented. As mentioned, Hill-Tout's consultants explained that the original Kwantlen person was the sky-born hero Swaniset,[78] who as Old Pierre explained to Jenness, originally dropped from the sky at Sheridan Hill near the east shore of Pitt Lake. According to Old Pierre, Swaniset (the "Supernatural Benefactor") was the greatest of the Lower Fraser River's First People, for he "accomplished even greater miracles than the other leaders of his generation," including the Katzie people proper's own first ancestor, Thelhatsstan.[79] In the earliest histories, as related by Old Pierre, Swaniset played the predominant role not only in facilitating physical and metaphysical transformations, but also in providing the region's populace and the other tribal leaders with supra-tribal leadership. As Jenness learned, among other great feats, Swaniset created the network of sloughs connecting the Fraser Delta's various waterways. The last (and therefore the most important) slough Swaniset created stretched from the Alouette River southward, terminating at a point about 300 yards north of the Fraser River. Although the village at the end of the slough was named Katzie (a geographical reference to the fact that a spongy moss, called Katzie [Q'eytsi'i] in Halq'eméylem, grew in abundance there), the slough itself was known as the "River of the Kwantlen People", for it was at Katzie that the Kwantlen people lived.

The Kwantlen, however, were not to remain the sole occupants of what was then a seasonally flooded settlement site, or even its most permanent residents, because as Old Pierre explained, Swaniset subsequently "ordered" the rest of "his people to accompany him to Katzie on the Fraser River, and to make

77 R. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890.* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992); Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*; MacLachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals.*

78 Hill-Tout, *The Salish People,* Vol. III, 69.

79 Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian,* 12.

homes for themselves at that place."[80] The modern Katzie tribe, as Jenness learned, was therefore "an amalgamation of at least two, and perhaps several, communities that claim separate eponyms. Only one community inhabited the vicinity in early times, and its village was not at Katzie itself, but at Port Hammond, a mile away. The other community occupied the district around Pitt Lake, ten miles to the north, and did not move permanently to Port Hammond until the latter half of the nineteenth century."[81] According to the indigenous history, the people ultimately and officially identified by fur traders and later government officials as the Katzie appear to have been the formerly more distinct community from the settlement on Pitt Lake.[82]

Once the Katzie and Kwantlen winter homes were unified at Katzie, Swaniset set about making the site an important seasonal gathering place for other more distant people. Shortly after the amalgamation Swaniset's wife shared the contents of a special box with the people gathered at Katzie, thus introducing eulachon to the Fraser River system. Swaniset then "travelled around the country inviting the more distant people to come and share their good fortune." Those who accepted the invitation came to benefit from their relationship with the growing and wealthy community at Katzie, while those who refused to make the journey and partake of the eulachon gift were chastised as being "senseless."[83]

So powerful and influential was Swaniset, and so intent his desire to create supra-tribal social and economic relationships, that he even ventured with canoes of dried eulachon to distant saltwater settlements in Puget Sound where he engaged in trade and gambling games. After visiting various human communities he eventually travelled so far to the south that he reached the homes of the various salmon species. Within Coast Salish history, great things are usually only achieved after heroes complete arduous journeys to distant places, and so it was with Swaniset who, upon visiting the southern settlements of the various species of salmon people, ultimately reached the home settlement of the great sockeye salmon people. It was among the sockeye that Swaniset announced his intention to marry the leader's daughter. Sometime after the marriage union was achieved, Swaniset declared his desire to bring his new sockeye wife back to the Fraser River with him, thus establishing the precedent of patrilocal marriages among the upper class and instituting the practice of regular visits of affines to their in-laws' residences, as demonstrated by the regular return of the sockeye woman's family to her new home on the Fraser.[84]

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80 Ibid., 16.
81 Ibid., 6.
82 Ibid., 10, 12-13.
83 Ibid., 17.
84 Ibid., 17-20.

The amalgamated Kwantlen and Katzie settlement at Katzie, however, had now become too crowded, and so, following Swaniset's lead, many of the people dispersed to other locations. Swaniset himself "moved his home a mile farther up the river." Later, at an unspecified time, Swaniset's Kwantlen people (who continued to recognize Swaniset as their first leader, but henceforth appear to have traced their leadership through another "first man," the aforementioned Skwelselem, who was not sky-born but a "descendant of the earth") "moved away from Katzie and occupied the site [formerly] covered by the Penitentiary at New Westminster."[85] These New Westminster Kwantlen settlements were called Qiqá:yt and Skaiametl.[86] It was after this migration that X̱exá:ls the transformers arrived to finish the work of Swaniset. As such, the indigenous historical discourse records that it was prior to the arrival of the great Transformers, and hence before the commencement of the stable human era, that Swaniset had used a variety of social networks to establish himself as regional supra-tribal leader.

How long the Kwantlen people lived at New Westminster is uncertain. What is remembered is that the eventful arrival of X̱exá:ls set in motion a series of new transformations which led to subsequent movements. At New Westminster X̱exá:ls encountered a man who always wandered through the woods, which apparently prevented him from being a good father and husband, so as punishment he and his family were changed to wolves who continued their wandering ways.[87] Henceforth, the wolf people made available to other Kwantlen special spirit power to assist young men in hunting and women in mat-making and weaving woolen garments.[88] According to oral traditions collected by Wilson Duff, Charles Hill-Tout, and amateur historian B.A. McKelvie, when the Hudson's Bay Company arrived in the Fraser River and established Fort Langley in 1827, the Kawantlen and certain other lower Fraser River Salish communities moved upriver to be near the fort.[89] Old Pierre explained that the New Westminster Kwantlen ultimately made their home on the north side of the Fraser River across from the fort.[90] By the mid-twentieth century the Kwantlen as a whole were commonly and legally referred to as the "Langley Indians," though in 1994, under the leadership of Chief Marilyn

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85 Ibid., 12-13. See also, Hill-Tout, *The Salish People,* Vol. III, 69.

86 Duff provides a Kwantlen perspective on these settlements. See Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 23. The Musqueam also claim Qayqayt, and the modern day New Westminster Band asserts that they are, and were, independent of both the Kwantlen and the Musqueam. See Raymond (Rocky) Wilson, "To Honour Our Ancestors We Become Visible Again" in *Be of Good mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, ed. B.G. Miller (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

87 Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, 22.

88 Ibid., 48.

89 Hill-Tout, *The Salish People,* Vol. III, 68. See also, Duff *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 23.

90 Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, 48, note 3.

Gabriel, the community officially changed their name back to Kwantlen. Significantly, Gabriel had inherited her "Indian name" and position from her father Joe Gabriel and through him from his father Alfred Gabriel, who in turn received it from the prominent turn of the century leader, Chief Casimir (known in the Halkomelem language as Strkakel).[91]

The 1820s Kwantlen migration to Fort Langley was, therefore, an aspect or extension of an earlier process of migration triggered by smallpox eradication or weakening of the region's other occupants accentuated by a desire to access new economic opportunities and secure military protection from the coastal raiders.[92] Its expression is therefore more complicated than a binary or reductionist portrayal of indigenaity as a state frozen in time would allow.[93] It is overly simplistic to categorize the Kwantlen a single political entity when the evidence is so clear that under Swaniset's leadership there existed a number of distinct collective social groupings, each of which acted largely independently under the hereditary leadership of various less prominent earth-born heroic ancestors.

The earliest historical documentation of lower Fraser River Salish migration and identity is, unfortunately, rather sketchy. The European explorers and fur traders, while keen observers and experienced students of Aboriginal culture, were motivated to record different information than a contemporary audience might ask for. During his brief sojourn in lower Fraser River Salish territory in 1808, Simon Fraser recorded little that assists in locating or identifying Aboriginal communities. He refers to all the lower Fraser Aboriginal people collectively by the name "Sachinco," which is the Nlakapamuk name for Coast Salish — the term used by Fraser's upriver Nlakapamuk interpreter/guide. It is still widely in use by Nlakapamuk people today. The only Halkomelem-speaking tribe identified by name in Fraser's journal is Musqueam, located at the Fraser's mouth. In December 1824, however, clerks working under James McMillan, who had been sent north from Fort George on the Columbia River to scout for a site for the future Fort Langley, recorded information indicating that the Kwantlen had already firmly established themselves in a series of winter villages stretching over 30 kilometres up-river from New Westminster.[94] Upon

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91 I was in attendance at the naming ceremony on the Langley Indian reserve on McMillan Island where Chief Marlyn Gabriel officially reassumed the Kwantlen name for her community.

92 Maclachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals*, 107. See especially entry for 7 April 1829.

93 Using much the same evidence and methods, Wayne Suttles has likewise recently expressed the opinion that the Kwantlen migration was already underway prior to the establishment of Fort Langley. See Suttles, "The Ethnographic Significance of the Fort Langley Journals," 170.

94 Accompanying McMillan were 37 boatmen, one French Canadian translator and three clerks: John Work, Francois Noel Annance, and Thomas McKay. Of the clerk's reports only the journals of Work and Annance have survived. Both are available in published form with somewhat uneven and speculative interpretive editing. See T.C. Elliott, "Journal of John Work," Washington Historical

entering the Fraser via the Nicomekl-Salmon river portage route from Boundary Bay, McMillan's party encountered a people who identified themselves as members of what clerk John Work recorded as the "Cahoutetts Nation." Later, when they had ascended the Fraser as far as Hatzic Slough, McMillan met people living in a winter settlement that he considered to be of the same tribe and which he identified as "Cahantitt." Upon their descent the Hudson's Bay Company party encountered more members of the "Cahotitt" tribe near present day New Westminster. Suttles has interpreted these names as alternate renderings of the term Kwantlen,[95] which would mean that the Kwantlen people had already established themselves as far upriver as Hill-Tout's Kwantlen consultants of nearly a century later identified as the uppermost extent of their post-migration territory.[96]

Significantly, in the fort's early years, its journal writers frequently mention at least two major Kwantlen settlements with separate leaders who appear to have been brothers[97]: the first, located on what the traders referred to as "the Quoitle [Kwantlen] River," which today is better known as Pitt River, "where the chief of the Quoitlans, Whittlekanim, has his residence";[98] and the second, under a leader called Nicamous, at a site an unspecified distance upriver from the fort. The name of this second Kwantlen leader (variously rendered by the journal's three authors as Nicamuns, Nicamous, Nicameus, Nicamoos, Nic,ca,ueus, Ni,cam.meus, Ni,ca.mous, etc.) is suggestive, as it is most likely a down-river Halkomelem dialect speaker's attempt to render the upriver dialect name Leq'á:mel. Leq'á:mel as discussed earlier, is the name of the place where the survivors gathered in Dan Milo's story of the mysterious depopulating event, and the birthplace of the Salish Halkomelem language. The most obvious distinction between upriver and downriver Halkomelem is the substitution of "n" for "l." Leq'á:mel in the downriver dialect, therefore,

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Quarterly 3 (October 1912): 198-228; also, Nile Thompson, ed., "Journey Through the Land: A Journal of a Voyage from Fort George Columbia River to Fraser River in the Winter of 1824 and 1825, by Francois N. Annance," Cowlitz Historical Quarterly XXXII, no. 1 (1991): 5-44.

95 Suttles, "The Ethnographic Significance of the Fort Langley Journals," 170.

96 Hill-Tout *The Salish People,* Vol. III, 68-9.

97 "The Quaitlain Chief Nicamuns and his brother [Whaitlakainum] came in with 20 skins, small and large which they traded for blankets — these being the principal Indians of the neighbourhood, and who at all exert themselves to collect beaver, we thought it good policy in Mr. Yale to form a Connection with that family — and accordingly he has now the Chief's daughter as after making them all liberal presents." See, Maclachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals,* 85-6, for the dates 13 November 1828, and 25 November 1828. Later, it was discovered that Whatlikainum's daughter was already married to a Skagit man, a fact resulting in a great deal of tensions and confusion among the lower Fraser River Salish and the Hudson's Bay Company. In Halq'eméylem, siblings and cousins up to the fourth degree are called by the same kin term "Qelo:qtel," meaning that while Nicamous and Whatlikainum chose to emphasize the closeness of their relationship for social and political reasons, they may have actually been rather distant blood relatives. See Carlson, 27.

98 MacLachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals*, 35.

becomes Neq'á:men, or expressed in common English, Nicomen. Thus, while the exact location of Nicamous' settlement is never specified, it would appear that the second most prominent Kwantlen leader of the early nineteenth century may have been residing at, and bearing the name of, a site known as the birthplace of the modern lower Fraser River Salish people. By 1839, following Whittlekanim's death, Nicamous became the entire Kwantlen tribe's most prominent leader. By this time he had also taken up permanent residence on McMillan Island, adjacent to Fort Langley where, through his sister, daughters (and nieces?) who had married employees of the fort, he strove to regulate trade and (much to the chagrin of the Hudson's Bay Company) extract payment as a middleman from those of other tribes without marriage ties to the post's resources.[99] As early as June 1829 many of the Kwantlen had taken up residence directly outside the Fort's palisade, and by this time references to the Pitt River Kwantlen settlement disappear from the journal, although the Kwantlen settlement "a few miles higher up [river]" continued to be mentioned.[100] Likewise, the Musqueam, whose tribal core was on the north arm of the Fraser near the river's mouth, are reported to have had a fairly permanent settlement across the river from the fort's first site at the mouth of Kanaka Creek.[101]

Repeated early references to the main Kwantlen settlement being on the Pitt River and to the Katzie as "a weak tribe [further] up Pitt's River"[102] suggest that when the fort was established Old Pierre's Katzie ancestors had not yet made the move[103] to the Fraser proper — the site where they would ultimately have their major settlement site secured as a reserve by the Royal Engineers in 1861.[104]

For all its strengths as an ethnographic document, the *Fort Langley Journal* presents certain challenges in terms of its usefulness in plotting early nineteenth-century settlement locations, and for assessing the historical expres-

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99 Ibid., 92, 107, 113, 122, 147. See especially entries 8 January 1829, 7 April 1827, 19 May 1827, 31 July 1829, and 5 May.
100 Ibid., 116, 133.
101 Ibid., 136-7.
102 Ibid., 67.
103 By "made the move," I perhaps should say "made the *return* move," for it is unclear whether Swaniset's call for the Katzie to relocate from Pitt Lake to the settlement near the Fraser occurred: a) once, at the beginning of time; b) is thought of as occurring at the beginning of time but actually occurred during the early fur trade era, or c) whether after Swaniset's amalgamation of people the Katzie eventually returned to Pitt Lake whence they ultimately made a second return journey to the Fraser in the mid-nineteenth century. While the timing of these movements is of interest to historians, the more important thing for the Salish is the fact that the movements did occurr, not when they occurred.
104 See British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), *Royal Engineers Letterbooks*, C/AB/30.6J, 1-7, McColl, William, Sgt. (1861), Letter to Col. Moody, 13 May 1861.

sions of collective identities. This ambiguity stems largely from the fact that both the interconnections and the distinctiveness of the various Salish groups were difficult for outsiders to comprehend. As the fort's Archibald MacDonald recorded, "When we say the Quaitlines [Kwantlens] we very often mean any-one of the distant Tribes called among themselves — Quaitlains, Musquams [Musqueams], Kitchis [Katzie], and at a distance even the whole collectivity are better known by the appellation of the Cawaitchens [Cowichans] as that Tribe is the leading nation in this quarter." By "the whole collectivity" MacDonald likely was referring to all of the Coast Salish people living within the region serviced by Fort Langley.[105] This reference, however, calls into question what otherwise appear to be the identities of distinct tribes, and likely reflects the reality of competing collective identities traced through male blood-lines (tribal), and those created through marriage and the relocation of women to their husbands' homes which cut across tribal lines (affinal in the first generation but necessarily also consanguinial in the second).

Earlier scholars took the *Journal*'s ambiguity about tribal nomenclature as an indication that the Kwantlen had somehow amalgamated with what were formerly more distinct tribal entities around them: "an aggregation that proba-bly included the Kwantlen, Whonnock, Sxayuks, Matsqui, Hatzic, Nicomen, Qeqayt, and Coquitlam."[106] While this is one possible interpretation, the evi-dence better accommodates a hypothesis of Kwantlen occupation of territory left largely vacant by others; an assumption of another's land and resources without an accompanying loss of Kwantlen identity. The absence of the seven other tribal names mentioned above within both the 1830 and the 1839 Hudson's Bay Company censuses indicates that in the intervening three years since the fort's establishment the Kwantlen had asserted their authority over the territory.[107] More than a century ago the American ethnographer George Gibbs recorded that it was a tradition among Coast Salish people that a tribe's territo-rial title continued only until such time as the tribe became extinct.[108] And so it seems that among the Salish, as elsewhere throughout human history and geography, *natura abhorret a vacuo*. Coupled with Gibb's interpretation is

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105 MacLaughlin, *The Fort Langley Journals*, 99.

106 Hill-Tout, *The Salish People,* Vol. III, 24.

107 Hudson Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), Winnipeg, Man., D.1/123:66d-72, McDonald, Archibald (1830) [Census] Report to Governor and Council, (25 February 1830); and HBCA, B.223/2/1:30-53, Yale, James Murray (1839), "Census of Indian Population [From Fort Langley] and Crossing Over to Vancouver's Island and Coasting at About Latitude 50' From There Returning Southward Along the Mainland and Up the Fraser's River to Simpson Falls."

108 G. Gibbs, "Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon," in *Contributions to North America Ethnology* 1(2), ed. John Wesley Power. (Washington, D.C: Department of the Interior, United States Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, 1877; Reprinted, Seattle, WA: Shorey Press, 1970), 157-361.
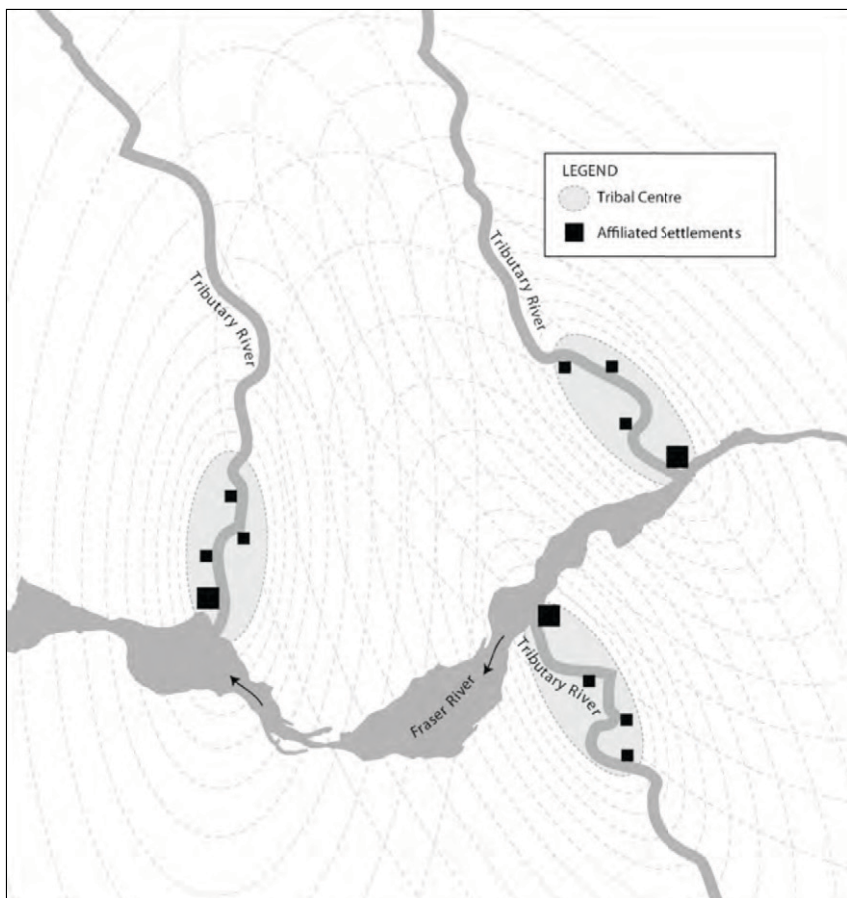
Map 4

Suttles' observation that Coast Salish tribal territory is better conceived not as an area confined by specific borders, but as an ever decreasing interest in lands as one moves farther from the core of tribal lands. This situation might best be conceived as a series of diminishing rings of interest emanating from a cluster of tribally affiliated settlements. (See Map 4)

What emerges, then, is an image of Kwantlen people simply asserting ownership rights over land and resources that had previously been considered by them as within their purview, but peripheral, i.e., areas where they had perhaps formerly held only access privileges forged through marriage alliances. The fact that what had once been the distinguishing tribal names of these other sites were never forgotten by subsequent lower Fraser Salish people, and in fact were retained as simple geographical place names by the occupying

Kwantlen, suggests that the Kwantlen never intended to erase the history and identity of their previous occupants. It also indicates the power of settlement names as cross-tribal unifying forces, while suggesting an historical expression of a group identity that was broader than the tribal unit. Be that as it may, whatever questions may have originally existed among the various Coast Salish communities over the legitimacy of the primacy of Kwantlen claims to these territories seem to have disappeared by the colonial era when the colonial government set the settlement sites aside as reserves for the Kwantlen people.

Though devastating, Coast Salish people's first engagement with disruptive global pathogens did not result in a sudden transformative break with pre-contact history and identity. Within the collective historical consciousness of the various Lower Fraser River communities were rich storehouses of ancient narratives describing not only ancestral responses to similar cataclysmic events, but early cross-pollinating tales of tribal ethnogenesis. These stories provided precedents that sustained survivors through the immediate crisis and then guided them as they forged new collective affiliations within what was in many ways a post-smallpox vacuum. Reduced in number and dispersed, survivors relocated to build new tribal identities that would have been recognizable to their ancestors in form and substance because they were built upon existing social, economic, and storied foundations. The process was dynamic and jarring, but never chaotic.

The contemporary expression of Coast Salish tribal collective identity is, therefore, in large part a product of people's accommodation of disruptive events as processed through a variety of social networks and historiographical narratives. The fact that such expressions have more recently been relatively stable speaks more to the forces of colonial-era Indian reserve creation and the subsequent imposition of the Indian Act governance system by the Canadian federal government than to any cultural pre-disposition or prescription. Coast Salish collective groupings had never been static. If the content of the dawn-of-time stories cited above are indeed themselves ancient (and there is good reason to believe they are), it is safe to say that prior to the late eighteenth-century epidemic Salish people already recognized their collective identities as being products of profoundly transformative precipitous events (such as those associated with the Great Flood, profound drought, a particularly severe winter, or the actions of the dawn of time transformers).

In light of indigenous understandings of the historical expressions of their collective identity, the scholarly interpretation of early contact-era history requires rethinking. Taking indigenous historical sources seriously — even if, as in the case of myth-like stories, they cannot be corroborated by archival documents or western science — not only leads to scholarship that is inclusive and meaningful to indigenous people, it also helps us create new and hopefully

more accurate histories. As Julie Cruikshank's artful discussion of Aboriginal people's relationship with the natural environment in *Do Glacier's Listen?* Reveals, in a northern context it does not necessarily matter whether a Coast Salish myth-like story describes a real event (i.e., whether the Great Flood can be linked to a geological reality); what matters is appreciating how belief in the historical legitimacy of the contents of such stories shapes people's subsequent historical behaviour.[109]

Situating history within a context created by indigenous historical consciousness, therefore, provides a means of highlighting what Marshall Sahlins refers to as the "systematic ordering of contingent circumstances."[110] Just as the subsequent non-Native re-settlement of British Columbia so aptly described by Harris was predicated on smallpox-induced Native depopulation, so too was the earlier smallpox-induced Salish re-settlement contingent upon circumstances whose significance lay in the "structure of the conjuncture."[111] In other words, it was individuals such as those genealogical founders named in the oral traditions who made choices and steered Aboriginal history forward by interpreting the smallpox epidemic within the context of earlier ancestral stories describing people's responses to similar disasters. This largely ignored resettlement in particular, and the role of migration narratives in general, need to be better understood if we are to appreciate not only the relationship between indigenous place and identity, but also the effects of non-Native incursions into indigenous space. Without such insight academic history and anthropology will remain disengaged from what indigenous people themselves regard as the core issues in the larger discussion about the relationship between indigenaity and modernity.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

KEITH THOR CARLSON is an associate professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan. He has authored or edited five books, including the award winning *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (2001), and most recently, with Kristina Fagan, *Call Me Hank: A Stó:lō Man's Reflections on Logging, Living and Growing Old* (2006). Carlson has also authored eleven articles and book chapters, including, again most recently, "Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism, and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon" in Ted Binnema and Susan Neyland, eds., *New Histories for Old: Changing perspectives on Canada's Native Past* (2001). Carlson's 2003 PhD dissertation The "Power Of Place, the Problem of Time: A Study of History and

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109 Julie, Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

110 Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 144.

111 Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*; Sahlins, *How Natives Think*, 10.

Aboriginal Collective Identity" received Honourable Mention for the CHA's John Bullen Prize for best dissertation in history at a Canadian University, and is now being considered for publication by the University of Toronto Press. Currently Carlson's work is divided primarily between a SSHRC funded project that approaches Aboriginal history through the lens of Indigenous historical consciousness (the way primarily memory-based people re-interpret their own history over time), and a project examining mid-twentieth century peasant movements in the Philippines.

KEITH THOR CARLSON est un professeur d'histoire agrégé à l'université de la Saskatchewan. Il est l'auteur ou l'éditeur de cinq livres, dont A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas (2001) qui a remporté un prix, et plus récemment, avec Kristina Fagan, *Call Me Hank: A Stó:lō Man's Reflections on Logging, Living and Growing Old* (2006). Carlson est aussi l'auteur de onze articles et chapitres de livres, y compris, et plus récemment, « Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism, and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts in the Lower Fraser Canyon », Ted Binnema et Susan Neyland, eds., *New Histories for Old: Changing perspectives on Canada's Native Past* (2001). La thèse de doctorat de Carlson en 2003 intitulée « Power Of Place, the Problem of Time: A Study of History and Aboriginal Collective Identity » a reçu une mention honorable pour le Prix John Bullen décerné par la SHC pour la meilleure thèse en histoire dans une université canadienne, et qui devrait être publiée par University of Toronto Press. Actuellement, le travail de Keith Thor Carlson est surtout partagé entre un projet subventionné par le CRSH qui examine l'histoire des Autochtones du point de vue de la conscience historique indigène (la façon principale dont les peuples axés sur la mémoire réinterprètent leur propre histoire au fils des ans), et un projet qui examine les mouvements paysans du milieu du vingtième siècle aux Philippines.